

FLORIDA PANTHER CAPTURE ACTIVITIES

April 24 - May 9, 2000

Prepared by Mark Lotz

Panther #78's Kittens Handled At Den

The last week of April was primarily devoted to #78's den on the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge. We cooperated with Dream Catcher Films, Inc. for a segment that will include our activities at the den in a program about the Everglades. The program will be aired on Turner Broadcasting System (TBS). Since we impose a strict limit on the number of personnel that enter a den site, allowing an extra cameraperson was not an option. However, the refuge biologist, Larry Richardson, provided videographer assistance as well as aided me when necessary. The "biologist-in-a-box" was set up on Tuesday and Wednesday morning while #78 was gone. We promptly took advantage of her absence to examine the den. There were two healthy kittens, a male and female. The standard procedures were performed; we determined the sex and weight for each kitten, took skin biopsies for genetic testing, administered wormer medication, and implanted transponder chips. The operation went smoothly and we were finished in minimal time.



These kittens may be featured on TBS!

Capture of #94_{F1}

We drove over to Everglades National Park Sunday night (30 April) to make one last attempt to find evidence of TX105's kittens. At daybreak we climbed into the helicopter and flew to her location. After many inconclusive pursuits earlier this season we finally obtained the verification we were looking for. Treed in the same small hammock

was TX105 was a 10 month-old female kitten. This young panther was designated #94_{F1}, the next sequential number in the radio-collared study population. She was lightly drugged to facilitate a speedy recovery in order to reunite with her mother. Although we previously had no evidence that TX105 was still raising a kitten, we also had no indication to the contrary. Our persistence eventually paid off with some rewarding information.

Panther #75 Recollared

By 9 May, panther #75 had moved back into the Bear Island Unit of Big Cypress National Preserve where we could change her collar. At the onset of the capture season we figured this was one panther whose collar we could change whenever we wanted because she was “always” in Bear Island. But she pulled a “fast one” on us by utilizing inaccessible (to us) private lands throughout most of the capture season. We arrived and located #75 close to the main grade before sunrise. We were able to avoid the heat of day by starting early. As soon as it was light enough to see, the dogs were led in toward her. She was only treed for a few minutes before we all arrived. Panther #75 is now two years old and weighs 66 pounds. This was a little lighter than expected but was likely due to the fact that until recently she was providing for kittens. She had denned for about one month before abandoning it for unknown reasons. She was otherwise healthy in all respects. With this capture we ended the most productive capture season in history!



The sun barely peeks over the horizon as #75's collar is changed in the relative cool of the morning.